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STATE FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, INR/AA AND INR/B

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [SG](#)  
SUBJECT: SENEGAL'S SOCIALIST PARTY IN CRISIS

REF: 05 DAKAR 2311

Classified By: CDA ROBERT P. JACKSON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D),

#### SUMMARY

1. (C) With one year to go until 2007 presidential and legislative elections, Senegal's leading opposition party is experiencing turmoil. Dissidents have created a faction within the Socialist Party (PS). Their goal is to suppress any aspirations PS Chair Ousmane Tanor Dieng has for the presidency in 2007 and find a more charismatic candidate.  
END SUMMARY.

#### THE COURANT DE PENSEE

2. (U) A group of long-serving and well-known PS members, led by Mayor of Ziguinchor Robert Sagna, has announced the formation of a dissenting "Courant de Pensee" (way of thinking). The faction makes up one third of the PS Political Bureau, and includes Cheikh Abdou Khadr Cissokho, Mayor of Bakel and former President of the National Assembly; Souty Toure, Mayor of Tambacounda and former Minister of Decentralization; Moustapha Ka, former Minister of Culture; and Mamadou Diop, President Leopold Senghor's Director of Cabinet. In the past, all have been dismissed by younger PS activists as "dinosaurs" and as the embodiment of the clientele system perfected by former President Abdou Diouf.

3. (C) Sources close to the Courant de Pensee told Poloffs their goal is to make PS Chairman Tanor realize his power is not absolute. They accuse Tanor of isolating all who challenge his leadership of the party while he prepares his run for the presidency. They believe the PS could win up to 30 percent of the votes in the 2007 elections (while, they hope, allied coalition partners would win another 20-plus percent) but not with Tanor as candidate. The "Courant" wants Tanor to remain party chairman but hopes to field another, such as Sagna, as the PS presidential candidate.

4. (C) While it probably delighted President Wade's ruling Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) to read about the "Courant," it has horrified Tanor's friends in the PS. Serigne Mbaye Thiam, in charge of electoral issues for PS and the opposition coalition, told PolOff (despite all other available evidence) that PS has developed a "strong culture of democratic decision-making." He said that in the past, issues were always openly discussed among all party members, not first announced in the media, as the "Courant" had done. He felt, however, that "Courant" grievances would ultimately be resolved.

#### COMMENT

5. (C) Despite Thiam's assurances, creation of this faction poses a serious threat to the PS and the opposition as a whole. "Courant" members appear to enjoy support in rural

areas and in their own constituencies. If the split is not resolved quickly and completely, there will be little time for the opposition to unite behind a single candidate, especially for the first or (if Wade so chooses) the single round of elections. Still, it remains to be seen whether the venerable PS will disintegrate or if this is a step in the rocky path to democratic renewal of the Party. It is worth noting that Sagna has worked closely with Wade on the Casamance peace process and that many believe that Wade has attempted to lure Sagna to join the PDS. END COMMENT.

JACKSON